

Forest Tales

Retold by
Meena Raghunathan
Mamata Pandya

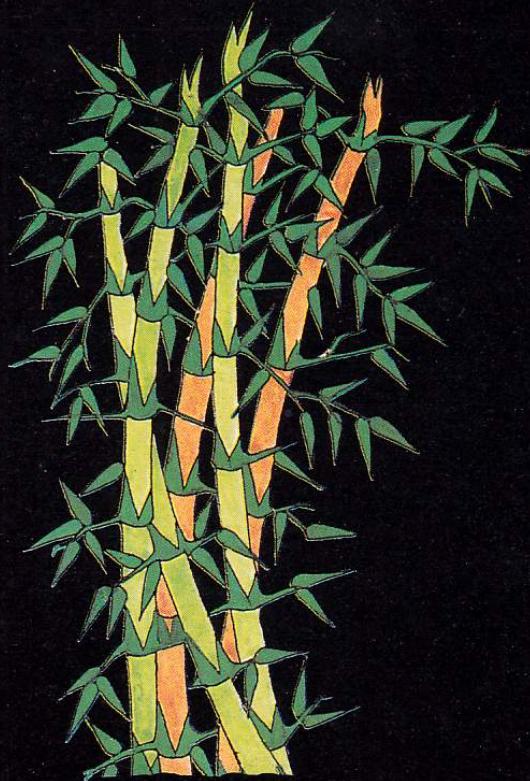


A Centre for Environment Education Publication
for South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme



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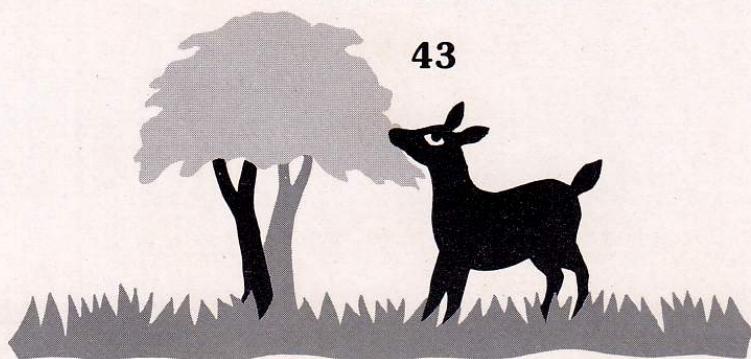
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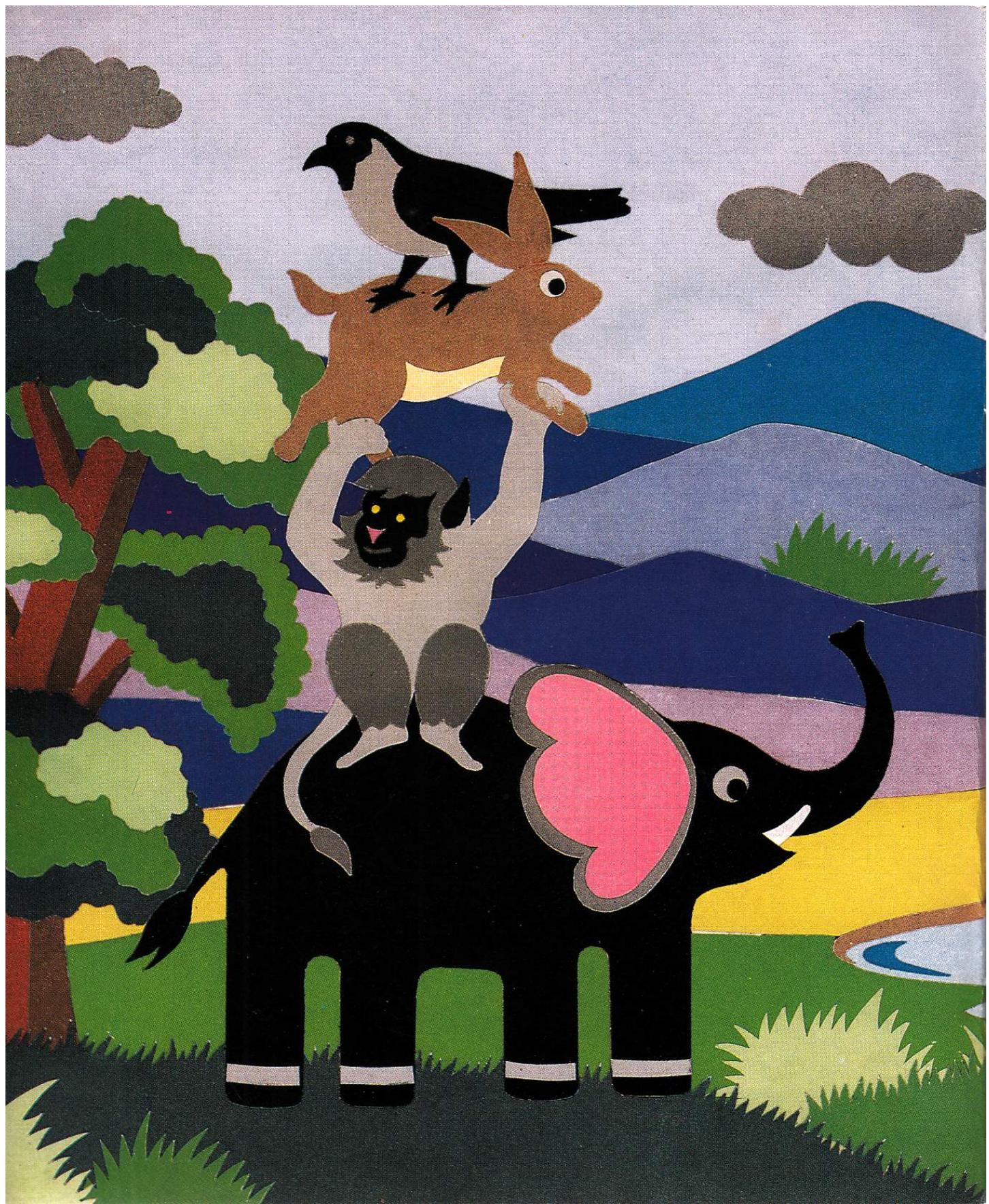
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The Four Friends

What do the forests bear?

Soil, Water and pure Air.

Soil, Water and pure Air.

These are the basis of Life.

This is the chorus of the song of the Chipko, a famous movement by people in a village in India to save their trees. The Chipko song reflects how all the elements together sustain life. This tale tells of how humans learned this fact, and also realized that co-operation is vital.



A long time ago there was a village. But a sad village it was indeed. The lands were no longer fertile, the soil was hard baked and wasted. The water sources had dried up. The skies were filled with a haze of dust. And the people, they were tired and hungry, ill and irritable, all the time.

One year, things were worse than usual. The people could not bear it any longer. They decided to send a few of their representatives to visit the wise old lama who lived high up in the mountains and ask him what was at the root of their collective misfortune.

So four young women and men set out on the long trek to the mountain where lived the lama. After several days of walking, the exhausted travellers reached the monastery. They related their tale of woe to the lama. The old lama smiled gently and said "My young friends, why have you come such a long way to search for the cause of your misfortune, while all the time the answer lies within your own village? Return home through the enchanted forest. On the way, you may find some clues that will help you in seeking your answer. Look sharp, think clearly, and try to understand what you see."

The foursome turned back again, more mystified than they had been when they started on their journey. As the lama had advised, they took

the route that would take them through the forest. On they walked, taking in the sights and sounds and smells of the forest, eager to unravel the mystery that the lama had cryptically hinted at. The forest grew thicker and quieter, and the foursome could not find a single clue. Suddenly they came upon a clearing in the forest and an unusual sight met their eyes.



In the shadows cast by a magnificent old tree stood an elephant. On the elephant's back sat a monkey. That was unusual, but odder still, on the monkey's shoulder sat a rabbit, and, on the rabbit's head perched a bird.

They made a peculiar pyramid, but they stood there as if it were the most natural thing in the world. The four travellers stopped short at the sight.

While they were whispering and wondering what to make of this strange quartet, the elephant spoke. "I see my friends that you are surprised at seeing us. Let me explain. You see this wonderful healthy tree. Well, when we first came to this spot, many years ago, this tree was just a new sprout. Each of us four laid claims to this plant.

"Each of us felt that we could tend it best. I, the elephant thought that as I was stable and strong as the very soil, I could nurture the plant. The monkey claimed that he knew best about the matter as he spent his lifetime among trees and plants. The rabbit claimed that as she was nimble and lively as a flowing stream she could get closer to the roots and help nourish the plant. The bird said that it could fly around free as air, and that is what would please the plant so much that it would sway and rustle and whisper in pleasure. We quibbled and quarrelled over the ownership, so much so, that after a while we forgot all about the tender plant and it became a weak and drooping sapling.

"One day, just as there seemed to be no hope left for the little sprout to survive, an old lama was passing through this forest. He came upon the four of us, angry and sulking, and asked us what caused this scene of discord. When we explained he smiled gently and spoke cryptically:

Woven together in this web of life
We all need each other, so end your strife.
In the elements of nature, there's no big or small,
But just one rule: united we stand, divided we fall.

"Having said these few words, the lama walked on. We thought a lot about what he had said. And we decided to try and work together to tend the tiny plant before we lost it through our squabbling. So united we stand," said the elephant. "The soil supports the plants, the plants clean the air. And in turn, the air nourishes the plants. And the plant helps the water get into the earth so that it can sustain all life. So we four together care for all these: soil, plants, air and water. Our tree has grown large and luxuriant and we all share the music and the fruits of the tree."

"This is our special tree, but it is also a world in itself, home to a myriad other living things. You too, young humans can learn from our story," chorused the animal foursome. And the peculiar pyramid began to slowly disappear, almost magically merging into the shadows, until all that remained was the mighty tree—alive yet tranquil, silent but eloquent.

The four young people stood transfixed. Then as they began to move again on the path through the forest, they remembered what the wise old lama had told them. The vision they had seen must have been the clue to their dilemma and to the happiness of their village. The answer lay with the four friends of the forest. As they walked they began to sing :

The soil, the plants, the water and air
Nurtured by these four friends' care
The tree of life stands strong and tall
This is a secret that's true for all.
With these four friends and a united stand
Working together, hand in hand
We'll make our land a real pride
And spread our message far and wide.

*Based on a folktale from Bhutan.
Rewritten by Mamata Pandya*

Turn into a Tiger

Forest
Funstop

Here are some ideas to turn you into a tiger. Try some body painting!

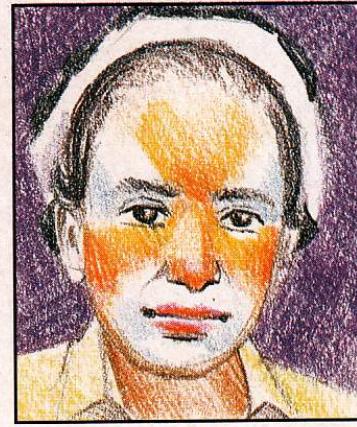
You will need some paint, preferably the type used by actors for make up. (Make sure that the paints you use are not toxic or harmful to the skin or eyes), and some cold cream.

To begin, tie your hair away from your face. Put some cold cream on your face and wipe it off. (This will make it easier to clean up the paint later.)

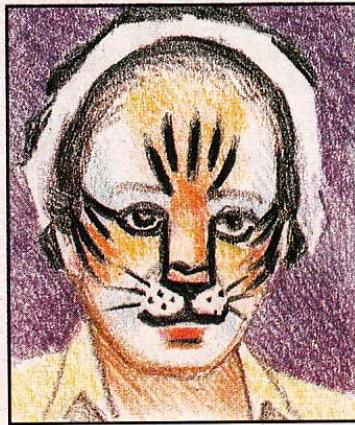
- Now apply white paint around your eyes and mouth.
- Rub a yellow orange paint over the rest of your face.
- With a brush or thick black pencil draw thick stripes on your forehead and the areas of your eyes, and thin stripes for whiskers.
- Dab on some pink on the nose. Paint on fangs at the corners of your mouth. Now all you have to do is roar!

You can experiment with turning yourself into all kinds of animals !

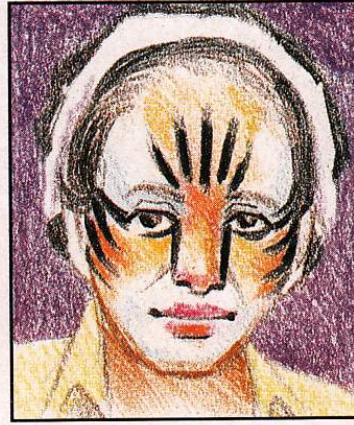
P.S. Make sure you don't forget to wipe off all the paint with cotton wool and cold cream.



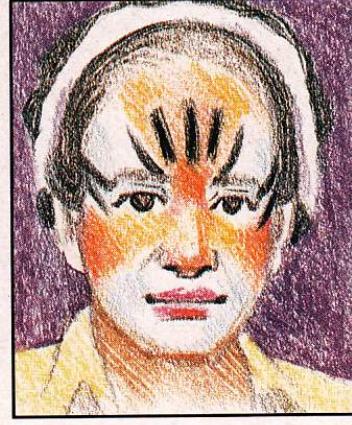
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3



2

Animal Court

Forests may look alike, but each one has its own unique combination of plants and animals. Each of these has a special and specialized role to play within that forest system. If anything should happen to even a single individual plant or animal, many others may be affected, directly or indirectly. This story tells about one such forest 'combination' where unlikely characters have important connections.

The jungle is waking up to a bright crisp morning. The dew on the grass sparkles in the first rays of the golden sun. The birds have been up since before daybreak, and the forest is animated by a medley of melodies. All the jungle dwellers, large and small, are about their business. Butterflies and bees, beetles and bugs...flitting, floating, buzzing or droning.

The creatures of the dark have retired for the day, after a night of prowling and stalking, hiding and seeking. All seems well in this world of green. Suddenly the tranquility is broken. A stomping and trampling, a yelling and shouting fills the air. A human approaches. And an agitated one at that. He carries a large stick and seems to be looking for something. He comes to a halt in a small clearing in the trees, and calls out:

To this green forest I have come
To look for the panther who has done
Much harm to me and my family.
Two of my goats he killed and fled
I search him now, I want his head.

Many hidden eyes are watching him. But the only audience he can see is a troop of monkeys, black faced, long-tailed langurs. They are comfortably settled in the leafy branches, greedily feeding on the leaves and fruit. As they stuff themselves, they survey the human. He appeals to them:



Oh monkeys on the trees so high
Tell me when you see him come by.

The troop listens, tails and whiskers twitching with curiosity. Someone looking for a panther? The human's search may be in their interest too! A bold youngster can't resist speaking up:

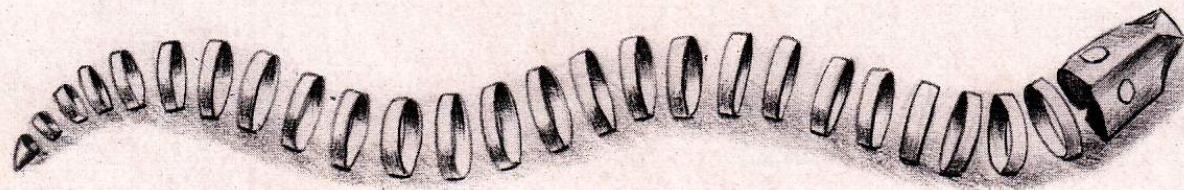
Brother, we will thank you so
If you can help to kill our foe.
With quite an ease he climbs the trees
In search of his favourite food-monkeys.

The venerable grey-bearded leader confirms the junior's youthful assertion:

My long-tailed clan has always feared
The panther more than the lion's beard;
For he can catch us where we leap and bound
In the branches high above the ground.

The troop hoops and leaps through the trees in the excitement of having found an ally against a common enemy. The trees shake, not just with the bouncing monkeys, but in indignation. The leaves tremble and rustle in agitation. They turn in mute green appeal to the wise old Neem tree who speaks for all the plants, large and small:

We make the forest rich and alive
Offer food and home to many lives.
My tender leaves are the langur's lunches,
Too many monkeys would mean bare branches.
The panther helps me stay healthy and green
By keeping the monkeys from stripping me clean.



The clearing fills with the clamour of claims. A hiss cuts through the hubbub. A long, black snake slithers through the grass. A temporary lull descends as she exclaims:

I know the panther is feared by all
But I must admit I do not want his fall.
He helps my kind while on the prowl
By eating my enemy-the peafowl.

A very different view to the picture this is. There is confusion as sides are taken and argued. The jungle resounds with the notes of discord.

And the culprit? The cause of the chaos? From a perch on a branch comes a low growl. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, the panther lets out a roar:

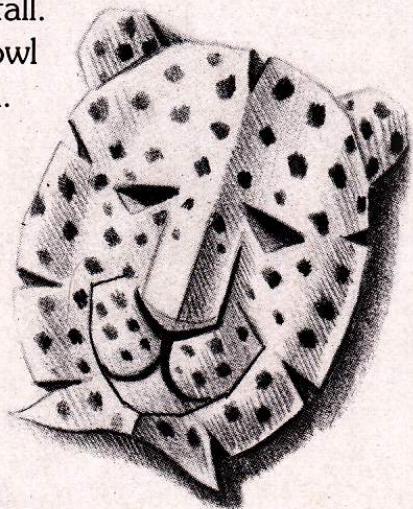
Surprised I am that you should argue
From so many different points of view.
I live my life as I was meant to
So what is wrong with what I do?

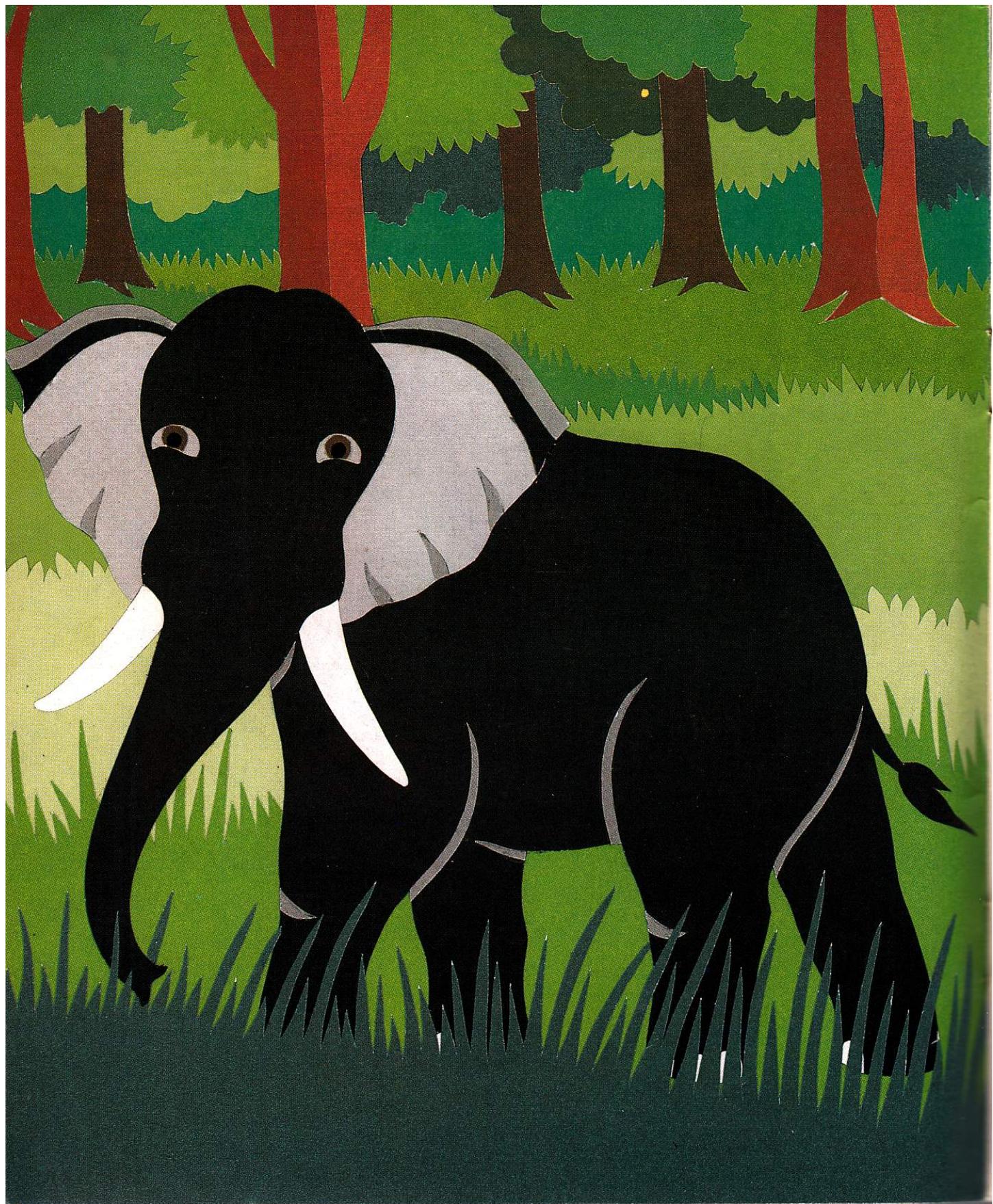
The accused has spoken. Accusers are in disarray. Each thinks he's right, the other is at fault, each sticks fast to the view he holds.

Suddenly a loud trumpeting rends the air. The tall grass sways, the elephant appears. He looks surprised to see the crowd. But the creatures gathered there heave a sigh of relief. At last there seems to be an arbiter in sight. Accused and accusers together they plead:

We have been arguing this without end
Please help us, Oh elephant, our wise friend.
We beg you to help us decide
Who is wrong and who is right.

With his ears a flap and trunk raised high, the elephant hears them all out. In respectful silence the assorted company awaits the judgement. With a





serious mien the elephant ponders the case, and with the wisdom of the ages, solemnly proclaims:

Woven together in the web of life
We all need each other, so end your strife.
Each plant, each animal, big and small
United we stand, divided we fall.

Thus spoke the wise elephant. Now why don't you decide, what is wrong and what is right!

Original story by Mamata Pandya



Elephant Mask

Forest
Funstop

Would it not be fun to act out this little story with your friends?
You could make simple masks for the animal characters.

To get you started, here are directions on how to make an Elephant Mask.

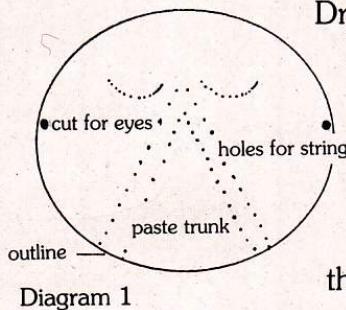


Diagram 1

Draw and cut out the outline of the mask as shown in diagram 1.
Make sure this is larger than the size of the face.

Draw and cut out separately, the outline of
the ears which are shown in diagram 2.
Colour the face and ears.

Cut out the eyes as in the picture and paste
the ears to the sides of the face.

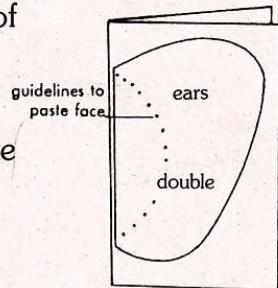
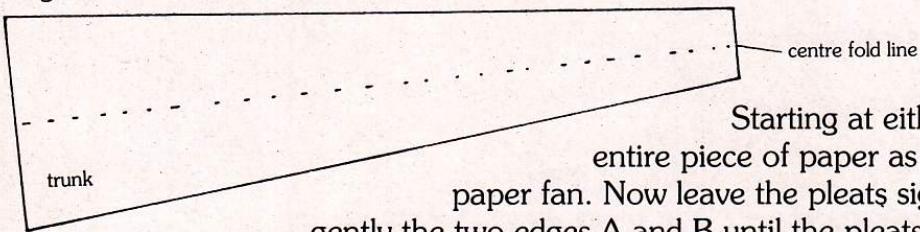


Diagram 2

Take a large sheet of paper like a newspaper. Use
this paper for the trunk. Make it as long as possible. Colour it
black. Do not use water colours. Fold this piece lengthwise
along the centre so that the coloured part faces outwards, as in diagram 3.

Diagram 3



Starting at either end, pleat the
entire piece of paper as you would pleat a
paper fan. Now leave the pleats slightly loose. Separate
gently the two edges A and B until the pleats form a 'V' shape
as in diagram 4.

Now press together the pleats at the junction
of the 'V'. Invert the pleated 'V' so that it looks
like diagram 5.

Paste the broader end of the 'V' to the mask just
between the eyes.

Diagram 5

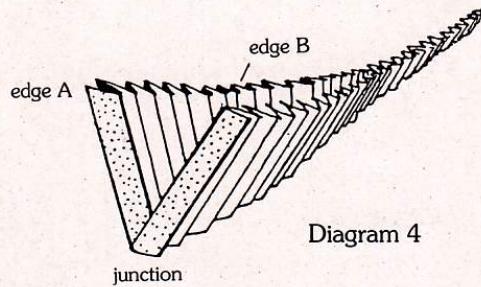
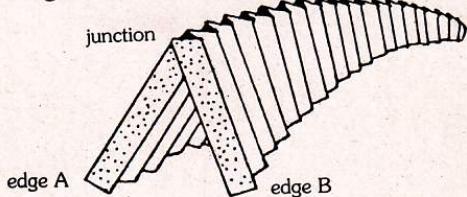


Diagram 4

Now your
elephant mask is ready. Put a string or
elastic through the holes on the side and
put on the mask. Have fun!

Mask ideas: Wilson Solanki

The Stone Lion

The Buddha said that a forest has unlimited kindness and benevolence. It demands nothing and gives generously, offering shade even to the woodcutter who comes to cut it. Utilize its gifts wisely and the forest will always provide for you. But if you abuse its generosity, you will end up with nothing. This story tells of what happens when a forest is treated with respect, and what happens when greed overtakes humility.

Once long ago there were two brothers. Their father was dead, and they lived alone with their mother in a big house in a fertile valley.

Now the elder of these brothers was a very clever man, but had a selfish and cold nature. He loved money and would do anything to get more. The younger was simple and kind. But he was not good at making money, for he would often give away more than he earned to the poor and needy. After the death of their father the elder brother did most of the business of the family by himself, and supported his brother and his mother. The younger brother, although quite willing to work as hard as he could, did not help to make much money.

After some time the elder brother became impatient, and said to his younger brother, "I can no longer support you, you lazy fellow. You must go out into the world and take care of yourself."

The poor boy was very sad when he heard his brother say this. But he was not able to refuse to go, so he put together his few possessions, and went to say good-bye to his mother. The good woman was very angry when she heard the news, and she said to her son: "If your hard-hearted brother forces you to leave the house, I will go with you. I cannot remain any longer with such a cruel man."

So next day the mother and her younger son left the house and went off together to find a way of earning their living. After they had travelled for a long distance, they came to a tiny empty house at the foot of the large hill, not far from a thick jungle. As there was no sign of life near the house, they entered it and slept there during the night.

Early next morning the boy took an axe with him and went into the jungle. He planned to cut wood from the jungle to sell, so that he could buy food for himself and for his mother. But as he entered the jungle, lo and behold, an awesome sight awaited him. For at the mouth of the jungle was sitting a stone lion. And as he tried to pass by the lion and enter the jungle, the lion spoke in a deep growl:

"Man where do you go with your axe?" The young man was nervous, but he gathered together his wits and answered. "King Lion, I go into the jungle to cut some wood. For if I do not sell the wood, I cannot buy any food. And if I do not cut some wood for the fire, we cannot cook the food."

"And how much wood will you cut, young man?" asked the Lion.

"As much as I need to buy food for one day. And as much as we need to cook two meals, King Lion," answered the boy.

The Lion was pleased. "And are you sure you will cut no more?" he asked.

The boy was surprised. "What need have I to cut more?"

"Go in young man and cut your wood. Make sure you cut only branches and do not kill a tree. And cut not a branch which has a nest on it. We will meet again in the evening," said the Lion.

The boy went into the jungle and cut some wood, following all the Lion's instructions. And when he came out of the jungle in the evening, the Lion addressed him once again.







"Young man, I see that you have done as you promised. You have cut only as much as you need. Go your way and be happy," he said.

The young man went into town, sold his wood and bought food to take back to his mother. Mother and son ate well and slept.

And so it went on for weeks and months. Everyday, the youth would encounter the Stone Lion. The Lion would ask him the same questions. And the young man would answer. And never did he ever cut more wood than he required. In the evening he took what he had cut down into the town and sold it in the market.

The news of his brother and mother living comfortably soon reached the eldest son, who wondered how it had happened. He decided to visit them and to find out what his brother did for a living.

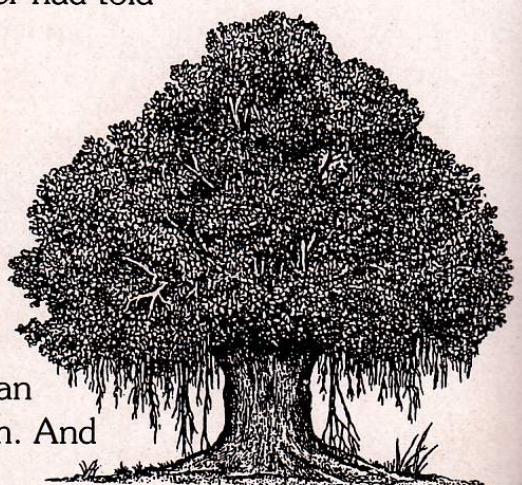
The younger brother was away, but the mother received her eldest son very kindly and gave him the best food and drink. When the younger brother returned in the evening, he greeted his brother lovingly and being kind-hearted and forgiving by nature, he told his brother exactly how he earned his living.

The elder brother's eyes sparkled with greed. A whole forest of fine trees, just waiting to be cut and sold! How much money he would get! So next morning he set out into the jungle. As his brother had told him, he encountered the Stone Lion.

"Who are you? said the Lion in a deep voice,
"And what do you want?"

"I'm the brother of the young man who comes here everyday," said the elder brother.

The Lion asked him the same questions that he asked the younger brother everyday. And the man answered, as his younger brother had taught him. And the Lion allowed him to go in.



But once he went in, the elder brother cut down not branches, but a tree. And not one tree, but several. For he planned to sell the wood and get a lot of money.

And then, as evening set in, slowly, laboriously, he dragged all the wood that he had cut towards his brother's home. But as he approached the boundary of the jungle, a shock awaited him. For, as he tried to pass by the Stone Lion, he heard a heart-stopping voice.

"Man, where do you go with all this wood?" said the Lion. It looked almost alive, its eyes glowing red in the evening light.

The man could only stammer and stutter: "King L-L-Lion! I will sell this wood to buy food for m-m-my family. And a few silken clothes for my children. And some jewels for my wife. For they all cry that their friends have all these things, but not they."

"Man, I warned you before you went in. You can take what the jungle gives you, but only to fulfill your need, not your greed. It is men like you who destroy the jungle, killing the trees and the creatures who depend on them. And all because you are greedy. Remember, if you do not care for the earth, the earth will cease to care for you. No longer will there be life-giving rivers. No more will the earth yield your crops. You and all mankind will suffer," rumbled the Lion in a majestic voice. "No man shall take from my jungle anything more than he needs."

The man was terrified. He only wanted to get away. "King Lion. I have made a mistake. Let me go this time. Never again will I do this," he said in a trembling voice.

"Be gone and never let me see your face again, ingrate," growled the Lion. "I hope you learnt a lesson today."

And the man ran all the way to his brother's house, as fast as his legs could carry him. But whether he had learnt a lesson, who can say?

*Based on a folk tale from Tibet.
Rewritten by Meena Raghunathan*

The Height Of It

Forest
Funstop

From the group of trees that you can see around you, find the tallest tree. Try estimating the height of this tree.

There are many ways of doing this. One of them is suggested here:

Ask a friend to stand next to the tree.

You walk away from the tree so that the full height of the tree is seen.

Take a pencil, scale or a straight stick in your hand and hold it with your arm fully outstretched.

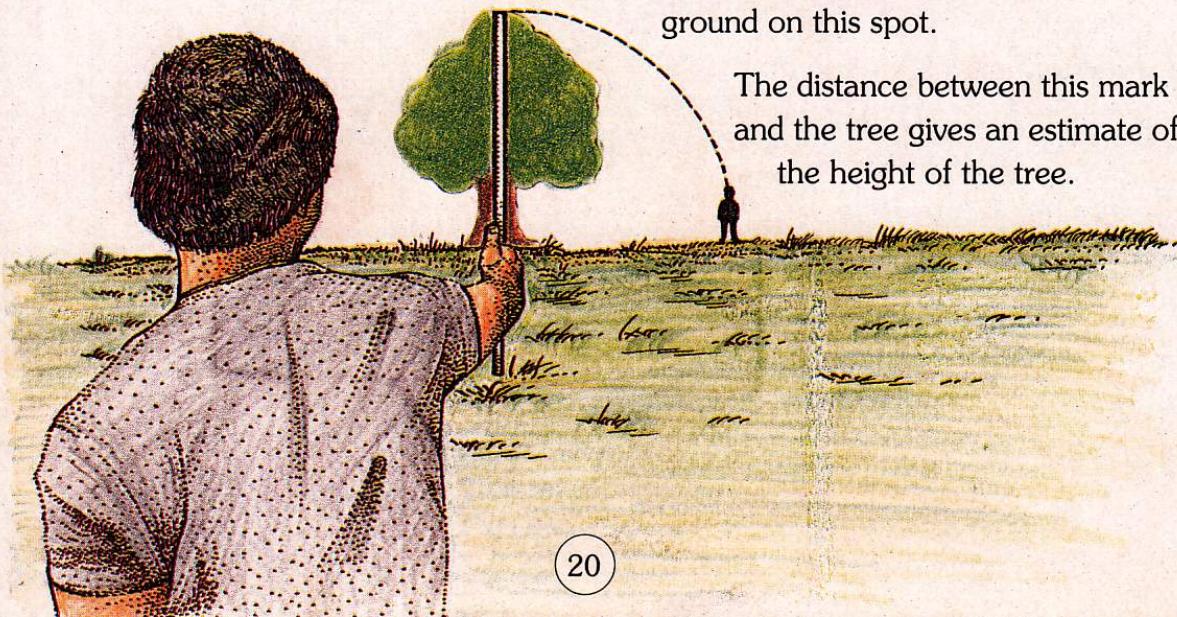
Now hold the stick so that the upper end appears to be in line with the top of the tree.

Slide your thumb downwards on the stick till it is in line with where the tree meets the ground.

Turn the stick through a right angle--that is from a vertical to a horizontal position, on either the left or the right side.

Keep the thumb-end of the stick in line with the base of tree. Ask your friend to move slowly away from the tree, moving in the same direction as the stick and parallel to it. When your friend appears to reach the end of the stick, tell him/her to stop. Ask your friend to make a mark on the ground on this spot.

The distance between this mark and the tree gives an estimate of the height of the tree.



A Forest Celebrates

Forests are some of the richest expressions of life on this planet. Humans have lived in forests for less than one thousandth of the time that forests have grown. Once they lived in harmony with forests, but today humans are destroying this green world. In this fantasy, forest dwellers discuss how humans can once again be taught to respect and preserve forests.

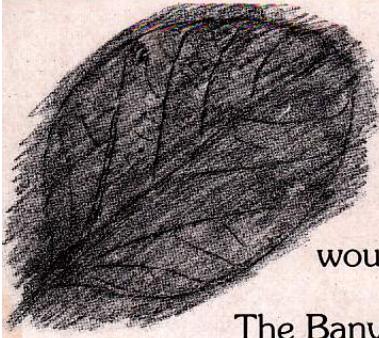
It was a hot summer evening. Dark clouds were piling up but the rains still seemed far away. I was lying in bed, imagining how wonderful the first rains would feel, the scent of wet earth and the call of peacocks. Lost in these thoughts, I don't remember when I fell asleep. And slumber brought with it a dream.

There I was, standing in a forest. Large and small plants surrounded me. Suddenly, I heard a voice. "Look the rains have begun. Time to celebrate *Janmahotsava*, a celebration of the unique children of our earth-human beings. It is they who have given us names, and meanings to those names. Today their own actions are dragging them towards destruction."

As my ears caught these words, my eyes sought their source. But all around I saw trees, bushes, vines, grass, shrubs, leaves... till I realized that the voice came from the mighty Banyan tree. Just then a gentle voice asked, "Baba, why don't you say that humans are pushing us towards destruction?" The sweet *Chameli* spoke.

"No Child," chided the Banyan. "Don't talk like that. Mankind is thousands of years younger than we are."

"That doesn't give them the right to do just as they please. Look how they are cutting down forests like ours. Don't we know how many of our kin they have wiped off the face of the earth?" said the prickly *Ber*, bristling with anger.



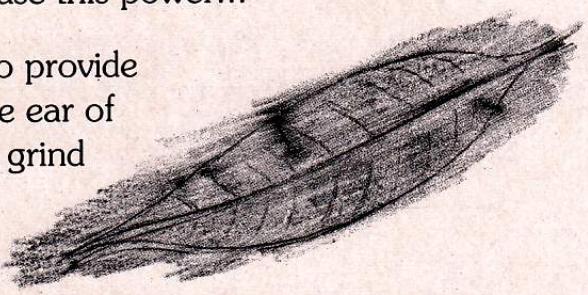
"That's not all, Baba. What haven't we done for them? We have given them food and drink, shelter and fuel, covering for their bodies. If it hadn't been for us, what would they have eaten, have worn?" cut in the Cotton plant.

The Banyan laughed. "Look here, children, what you say is not wrong. And that is why I am talking about celebrating *Janmahotsava*."

All the plants looked at each other, astonished and bewildered. The Banyan realized their confusion. "I will explain," said he, "What I mean is a celebration to awaken in human beings a love and respect for trees, plants and forests. That is what I call *Janmahotsava*."

"Easier said than done," said the Mango tree. "How, Baba, do you plan to create such a feeling?"

The Banyan looked serious. "I believe... No, I am convinced that all of us—trees, shrubs, grasses—have a special strength, a hypnotic power, which can draw the human spirit to us. We will use this power..."



"You speak truly, Baba. It is us plants who provide the very life breath for humans," cut in the ear of Wheat. "And yet, it is us that the humans grind into flour and swallow each day."

The Rice couldn't resist adding to this lament. "My brother Wheat makes a valid point."

The Banyan shook all his branches and roots, and cleared his throat. "You haven't even heard me out yet, my friends. I accept that humans are to blame for many of the misfortunes that have befallen our kind. But do you realize that humans are the youngest of all earth's children? We need to look at them with a better understanding, even a feeling of forgiveness."

The agitated clamour quietened. The Banyan took a deep breath and continued, "Let us put our hypnotic qualities to test. Let us mesmerize the humans. Let us fill their heads with our shades of green, our symphony of

Continued on page 27

What Makes a Forest?

When most of us think of forests, we think of trees. True, trees are the most prominent form of life in a forest. But there's much more to a forest than the eye can see.

More Than Just Trees

Each forest is a growing, changing community made up of many different plants and animals that interact with each other in a variety of ways.

Associated with trees are thousands of other kinds of plants—shrubs, vines, leaves, herbs, ferns, mosses. These use trees for support, for shade and for moisture to grow. It is all the green plants that make food for the animals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects. These in return pollinate flowers, distribute seeds, aerate the soil and carry out many other important functions. Even fungi, bacteria and other microscopic organisms play a vital role in the forest. They break down dead plant and animal material and turn it into a rich layer of soil called humus. Thus all are tied together in many ways—interdependent for food, living conditions and cooperation for survival.

Storey Upon Storey

The different kinds of plants in a forest make up layers or forest stores. The branches and leaves of the tallest make up the roof or the canopy. This is the food factory where photosynthesis takes place. Growing in the shadow under the canopy are the shorter trees and shrubs. These form the understorey. On the forest floor where it is darker and more humid grow the grasses, ferns, wildflowers, lichens and mosses. With the fallen leaves and rooting logs, these make up the forest floor.

Each layer has its own special set of residents—birds, animals, insects that find food and shelter there. Together they weave the rich tapestry of forest life.



Of all the continents, forests in Asia are being cut down at the highest rate.

We may live in towns but we depend on forests for many things: food, clothing, shelter, fuel, medicines, building materials, and much more.

About one-third of the world's land area is covered by forests.



Over the last 10,000 years the earth has lost one-third of its forest cover.

Over half the animal and plant species alive on earth depend on forests, and these will vanish with them.

Over 25 percent of modern medicines are derived from plants.

Forests for Life

Forests are vital life-support systems. They create conditions necessary for life by cycling of gases and water between air and soil.

Water: Forests are like sponges, absorbing rainwater and releasing it gradually into streams. This prevents it from rushing into rivers and causing floods. The absorbed rain water also provides water in dry months when it is most needed.

Soil: Forests hold the soil, keeping it from being washed away. This function is specially important on slopes. Without forest cover, the soil is washed into riverbeds, raising them so that they cannot contain the sudden rush of water. So floods are caused. Precious soil from mountain slopes flows away into the seas.

Climate: Forests stabilize atmosphere and climate. Deforestation releases large quantities of gases like carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide which contribute to the greenhouse effect, leading to a change in the world's climate.

Biological Diversity: Forests contain a diversity of habitats for a rich variety of plant and animal species. It is this incredible richness or diversity that is the source of most of our food, spices, clothing and medicines. For every one species discovered, there are probably a thousand more undiscovered species. If a forest disappears, so does this rich treasure.

Diversity of Forests: Scientists have divided the world's forests into four major groups based on the types of trees that grow in each one: Coniferous forests that grow in cold climate and have needle-shaped leaves adapted to a short growing season. Deciduous forests with broad-leaved trees that shed all their leaves once each year. Mixed forests that are made up of conifer as well as deciduous trees. Tropical rain forests that grow near the equator where temperatures are warm and there is a lot of rain.

sounds, our grace and our beauty. Let us so become part of them that they themselves become our best protectors."

"Alas, today, the youngest of earth's inhabitants is playing games. These games are leading to the destruction of our forests," rumbled the Tiger.

The Banyan firmly took the situation in hand. "That's exactly what I had started to say," he explained. "Humans are still naive. But they have been carried away on the strong wave of progress. We should not think of taking them back to the stone age. We must merely guide them in a new direction, on to a new path--a path of harmony with nature. That is where our role as hypnotists comes in."

"Come on, Baba, have you ever seen such a human being?" interjected the Neem bitterly.

"Why not? Just as there are oases in a desert, there are such humans in the mass of humanity."

"Hard to believe, hard to believe." The plants set up a chorus of disbelief.

The Banyan was unperturbed. "Believe me, such humans do exist."

The clamour rose to a deafening din with the birds and animals joining the chorus of disbelievers, when suddenly I, the witness to this meeting, spoke up, "They do exist. Such humans do exist." There was a moment of stunned silence as the astonished assembly stared at me. The moment passed, and in unison, they all shouted, "It's a human, it's a human. Here. In our forest."

There I was, lost in green, till the Banyan gently lifted me into his tangled mass and sat me on a thick branch. I am going to screen this man," said the Banyan. "You, Kadamb. You tell me what you can see through the screen." And rocking me in his arms he asked, "Well, what do you see in this man's breath?"

"Some air, and lots of pollution," replied Kadamb. "Very well, let us fill his



breath with fragrance. And what is it that fills his ears?" asked the Banyan.

"His ears resound with a cacophony of sounds--the clatter of machines, the din of city life--hammering, rasping, shrieking, sawing..."

"Let us fill his ears with the rustle of leaves and the chirping of birds. And what lies in his eyes?" asked the Banyan. "The eyes reveal streets, rivers, mountains, and dreams," replied *Kadamb*. "So nature still lingers in his eyes," Baba sighed in relief. Taking a deep breath, the Banyan continued, "Then tell me what his heart holds."



"Blood flows through his heart. But, wait, I also see traces of emotions and sympathy in the stream," said the *Kadamb* with a smile. "So now remains the head," said the Banyan. "Let's look and see what it contains."

"The head, the brain...Oh Baba, it's so crowded. Full of machines, railways, factories, cement, concrete, radios and rockets, trucks, trains, buses and buildings, and money, money, money," moaned the *Kadamb*.

"So the problem lies in the head, and that's where we will have to solve it," stated the Banyan. "Come on Monkey, you help in this operation. With your nails, you open up the head. And we will put inside the love for all animals, and the respect for nature, and sow the seeds of coexistence."

"But Baba," I yelled in fright, "You will operate on me just like that?" "No son. You won't feel a thing. We will give you some anaesthesia," said the Palm tree, giving me some of its juice.

As I watched, other trees also gave me juices, and I lapsed into unconsciousness. The monkey dipped his claws into the juices, and the operation began...

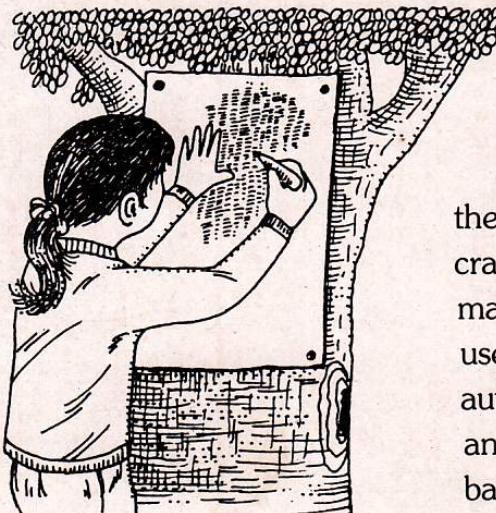
My eyes opened. Dawn was breaking. My sight drifted to the open window where a *Madhumalti* was dancing in the breeze. I was filled with joy. Suddenly the *Madhumalti* crept in through the window and lightly touching my hand, whispered, "Congratulations. The operation was a success."

Original Indian story by Barin Mehta.
Translated by Mamata Pandya

Tree Autographs

Forest
Funstop

At first glance all the trees growing together may look alike. But different kinds of trees have different characteristics which help to identify them. Among these are the bark and the leaves. Barks can be rough or smooth, dark or light. Leaves too are of different shapes and sizes. One fun way to make friends with trees is to take their autographs. How? Here is how.



Bark prints

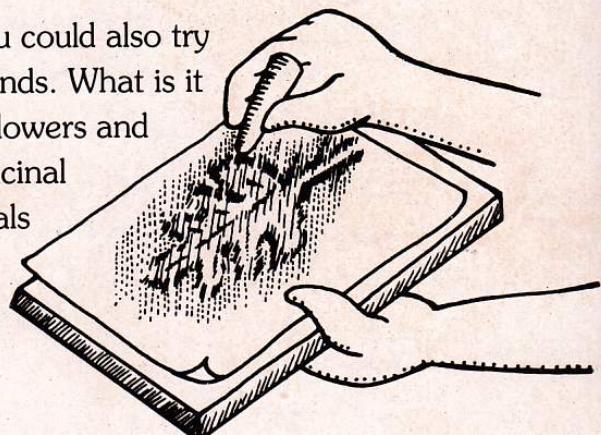
To take the tree's autograph, hold a blank sheet of paper steadily against the bark. Rub a crayon over the sheet to get the impression of the bark. The ridges will be coloured, while the cracks in the bark will remain blank. If possible, match the colour of the bark with the crayons you use, or describe the colour alongside the autograph. Try this with different kinds of trees and compare. Take impressions of the different barks on paper. These are the trees' autographs.

Leaf prints

Place the leaf on a smooth solid surface with the veined side up. Cover the leaf with the paper on which the print is to be made. Rub a crayon on the paper. You will get an impression of the leaf on the paper. Every time you take a tree autograph don't forget to label it with the name of the tree. This will help you to remember the kind of bark and leaves a particular kind of tree has.

Why not make a tree album in this way? You could also try to find out more about each of your tree friends. What is it called in your own language? What kind of flowers and fruits does it have? Does any part have medicinal value? Are there any special stories or festivals connected with the tree?

You will end up with a treasury of tree facts!



The Jackal's Judgement

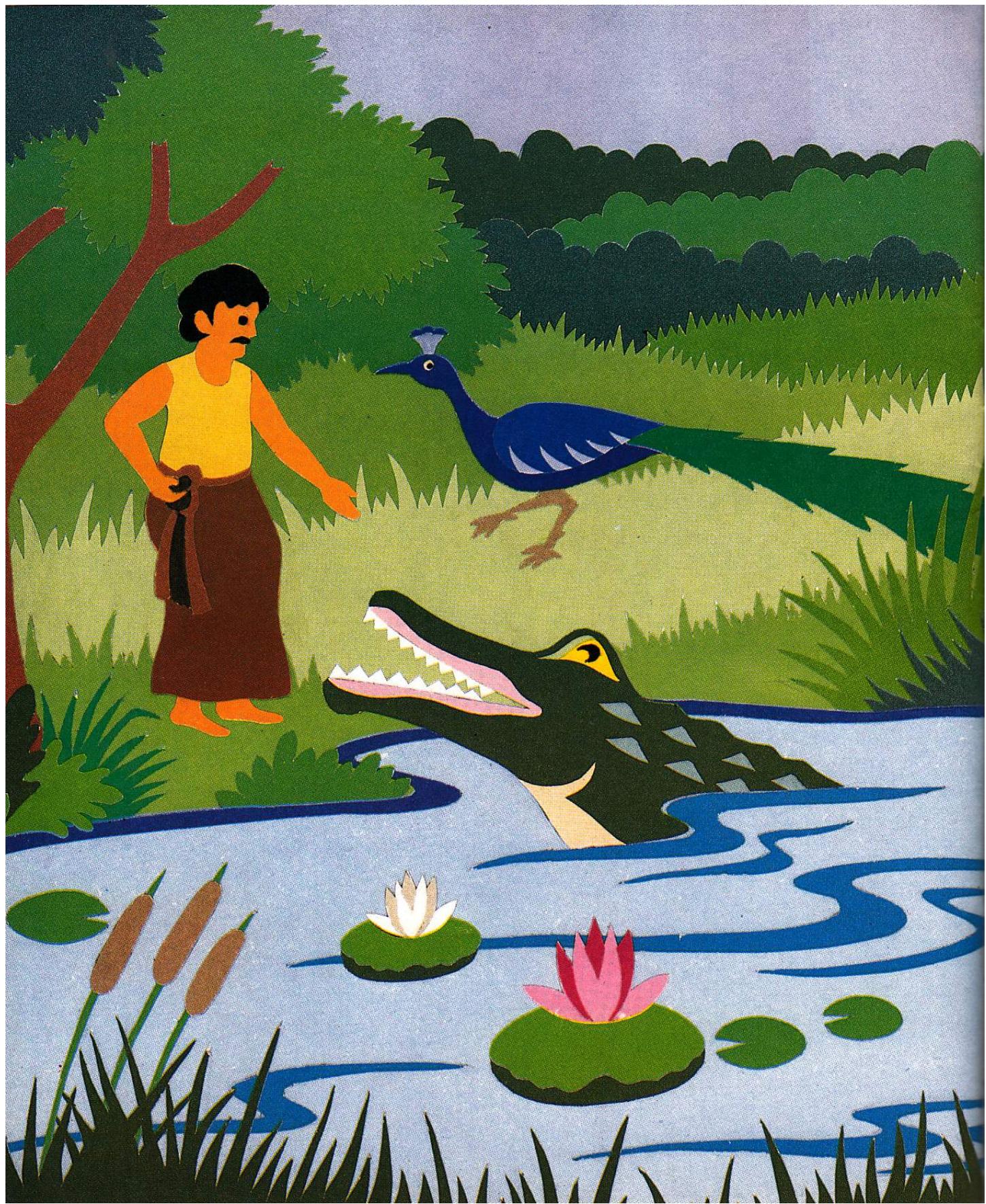
It is said that a tree is like ten sons. It gives ten valuable things: oxygen, water, energy, food, clothing, timber, medicinal herbs, fodder, flowers and shade. Sometimes humans forget all this and see the tree as only wood or money. In this story, the forest reminds a human of this and teaches him a lesson to remember.

In the middle of the lush green forest was a large pond. And in that pond lived a huge crocodile. Sometimes he floated lazily in the water of the pond. But most of the time he lay for hours together with his mouth wide open on the side of the pond. The crocodile had a burrow in the soft wet gooey mud on the side of the pond. This was his home. All in all, he had a good time, for the pond was rich in many varieties of fish and he could get a good meal whenever he wanted to.

But then one year the rains failed. The ponds and tanks in the jungle dried up one by one. The grass dried up. The animals had no water to drink. The jungle did not look so lush anymore.



The ponds dried up one by one. And one day, the pond in which the crocodile lived dried up too. The crocodile did not know what to do. No longer could he float in the water. No longer did he get enough to fill his stomach. He did not like to sit with his mouth open on the banks anymore, because the sight of the dried up pond made him feel sad. After thinking and thinking, the crocodile decided that he would get into his burrow and stay there till the rains came.



But the rains did not come. Days passed, and then weeks. The rains did not come. The ground became dry and parched. But the rains did not come. The ground grew lifeless and cracked up. Still the rains did not come.

The rains did not come and the ground grew parched and dried out. And the crocodile who had buried himself in the burrow could not come out. For the ground around him had grown dried and parched and held him in like a prison. He could not move backwards or forwards. He was stuck. And so he remained as the days passed, as the weeks passed. And he grew more hungry and restless with each passing day, with each passing hour.

Till one day he heard a man's footsteps coming close, ringing loud and clear. The crocodile waited till the man came really close, then called out: "Friend man, stay. Listen to me." Startled, the man looked all around. But he could see no one. "Who calls?" the man asked, a little nervously. "It is I, luckless crocodile," called out the creature. And then the crocodile related his tale of woe. "So friend man, dig me out," he pleaded.

The soft-hearted man was touched by the sad story. Not only did he dig the crocodile out, when he saw how weak the crocodile was, he even offered to carry the poor creature on his shoulder to a large pond on the other side of the jungle, where there was still some water.

And so the man put the crocodile on his shoulder and walked. He walked hour after hour in the hot sun till they finally reached the pond. And there he put the crocodile down.

No sooner had he put the crocodile down than the crocodile grabbed his leg. "Sorry friend, but I have to eat you. I am very weak from many days of starving. I do not have the energy to hunt now. So I will first eat you," said the crocodile. The good man was shocked. "You ungrateful creature!" he gasped. "I saved you from death and carried you like a brother to a new house. And this is what you give me in return?"



"I am sorry friend, I have to thank you for all your help. But eat you, I must," said the crocodile.

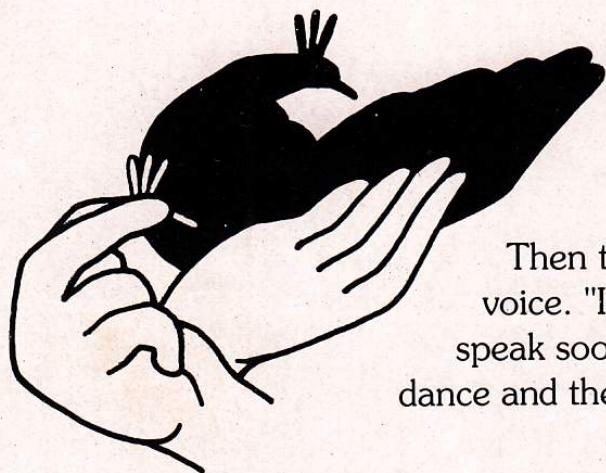
"I appeal to you, all those who witness this scene. You tall *Kumbuck* trees, that stand around. You pond, that gently laps the banks. You peacocks, with your shimmering feathers. You jackal, so knowledgeable and wise. I ask you all. Is it right that the crocodile whom I have helped, should thus turn and kill me, eat me, finish me?" pleaded the man, addressing all those around him.

The massive *Kumbuck* tree shook itself and rumbled from deep within. "You man, what else do you deserve? Your children, they shelter in my shade when the sun is hot. They swing on my branches in their play. Your brothers and sisters, they use my branches to build houses, twigs to make fire. My leaves you feed your cattle, my fruits you eat yourself. Still, not one of you hesitates to cut me down and sell me to a merchant if he gives you money. Do you not betray then? Why should the crocodile spare you?" Guilt was writ on the man's face. For was not all that the *Kumbuck* tree said true?

Then the pond spoke, in a soft, gurgling voice. "Indeed, my brother *Kumbuck* speaks sooth. Mankind does the same to me. Do you not take water from me for all your needs? Do you not come to me to fish? Yet, you and your kind, do you stop to think before you dirty me? You send your cattle to bathe in me. You wash your clothes in my waters. Do you

not dirty me then? Why then should the crocodile spare you?" Guilt was writ on the man's face.

For was not all that the pond said true?



Then the peacock spoke, in a loud harsh voice. "Indeed the *Kumbuck* and the pond speak sooth. I add beauty to mankind's life. I dance and they watch and rejoice. Immortal

beauty! A veritable dancing rainbow. But do they spare me? No! They kill me and sell my beautiful feathers. All for a fistful of money. Do you not kill me thus? Why then should the crocodile spare you?" Guilt was writ on the man's face. For was not all that the peacock said true?

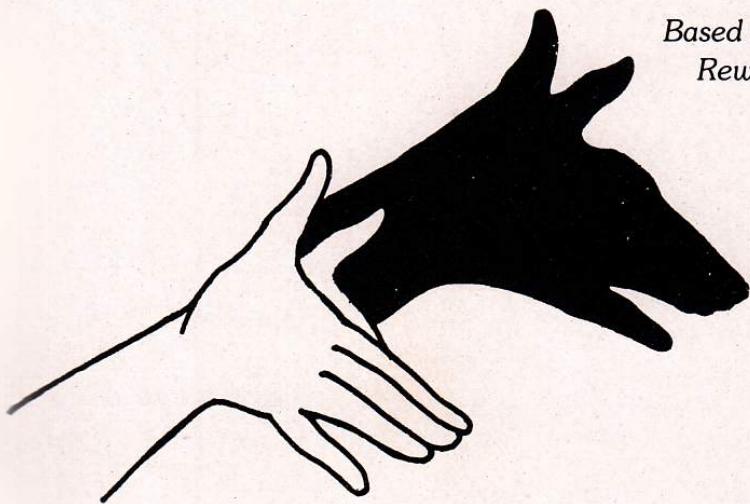
There was a silence as all thought about what had just been said. And then finally the Jackal spoke.

"I'm called the Judge in these parts and therefore I shall pronounce the judgement. It is correct indeed that Man is callous and selfish. He destroys the trees, the animals, the land, the water, the air... all his brothers. He destroys the very jungle itself in his greed. But today with our kindness, let us teach him a lesson. Let him learn that he cannot destroy so wantonly. For without all of us, he is indeed nothing. We sustain his life and his being. We give him so much, but take nothing in return. Let him learn this, and let him go. All we ask for is that he show us respect, care and love."

The man bowed his head in agreement. The crocodile, the Kumbuck, the pond and the peacock all agreed that the Jackal had spoken in wisdom.

And so the Man went his way, wiser.

*Based on a folk tale from Sri Lanka.
Rewritten by Meena Raghunathan*



Shadow Show

Forest
Funstop

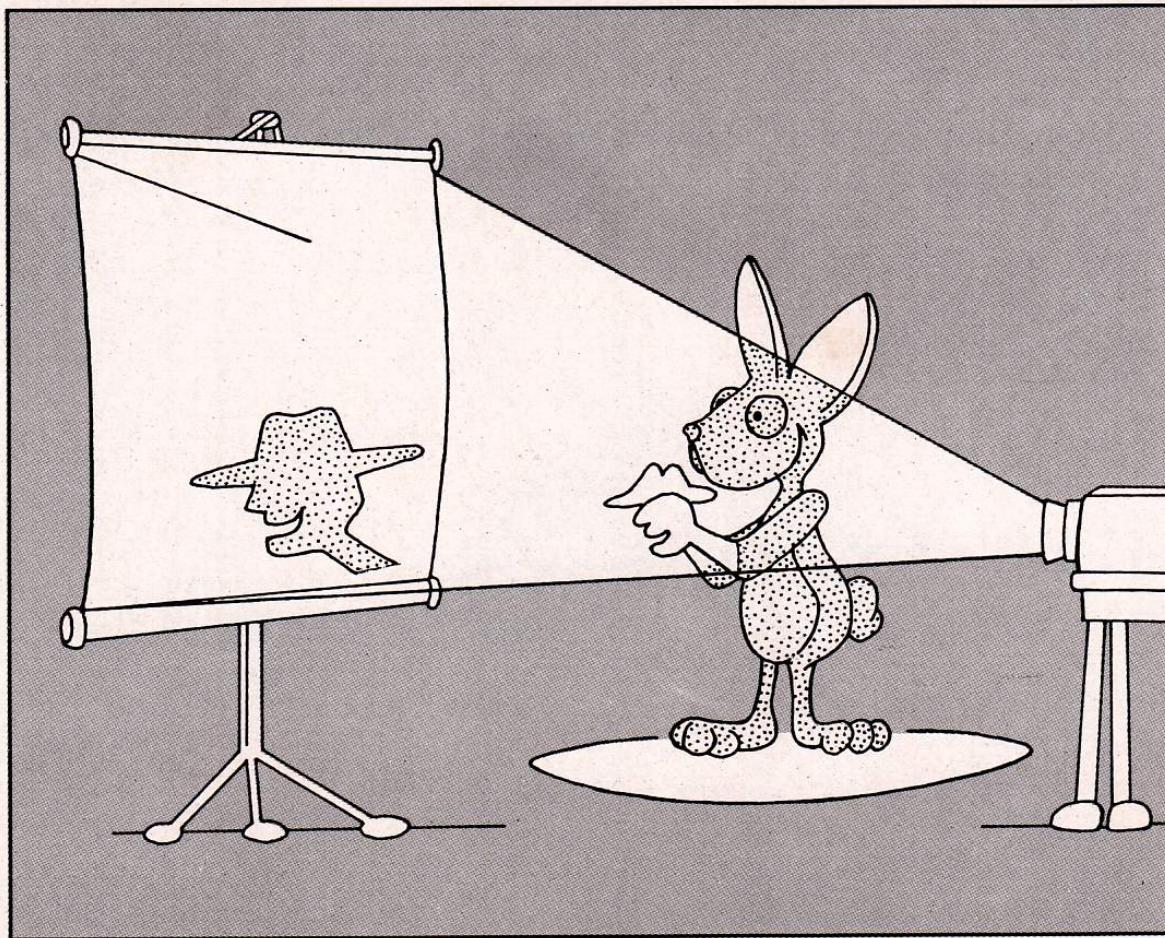
Put on a shadow play and enact the story that you just read!

One person can read out the story, making it really dramatic. The others can create the shadow characters. Here is how:

Darken the room. Set up a light source (a flash light or table lamp) about 4-6 metres from a white wall or screen.

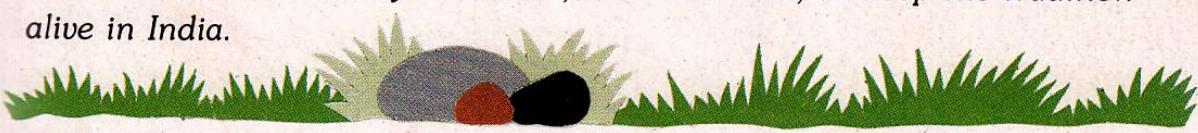
Shape your hands in the form you want and put them in the beam of light. The shadow will fall on the screen or wall.

You have just seen some shadow ideas to start with. With some practice you can create many more of your own.



The Twenty-Niners

When the trees go, the climate changes, water disappears, the land goes bad and desert conditions begin to appear. This is what happened in this story. But what happens when people realize just in time, the value of trees? And decide to take action to protect them? This story is based on a real incident. The community continues, over centuries, to keep the tradition alive in India.

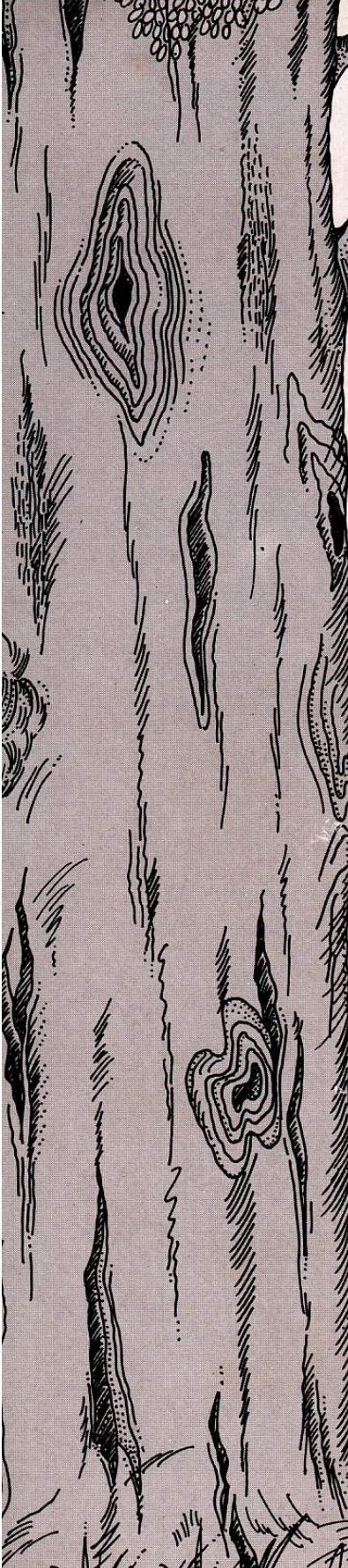


Five hundred years ago, a great drought came to western India. No rains came. Trees shrivelled and dried, the grass disappeared. Animals died of hunger and thirst. The villagers began to abandon their homesteads and move away, in search of food for their children and cattle. But the drought went on, and on. For three years, not a drop of rain fell, not a blade of grass remained unshrivelled.

In one of the villages, there lived a young man named Jambaji. He saw the dry wells and he was saddened. He saw his family starve and he was angered. He looked around and saw a parched land. He couldn't even imagine the times that his grandfather had often described. Times when the earth was covered by trees. Trees that had protected it from drying and cracking and blowing away in its bareness. Times when there was water, and grass. Times when the land was fertile and welcoming.

Jambaji thought and thought. He realized that it was the trees that had sustained the land and its life, that had protected the earth and saved the water, even in times when the rains did not come. He knew then that unless all the people realized this fact, they were doomed. A healthy environment was the key to their own survival, and trees were one key to a healthy environment.

The young man was so convinced by this truth that he made it his life's mission to try and convince people about the value of maintaining a

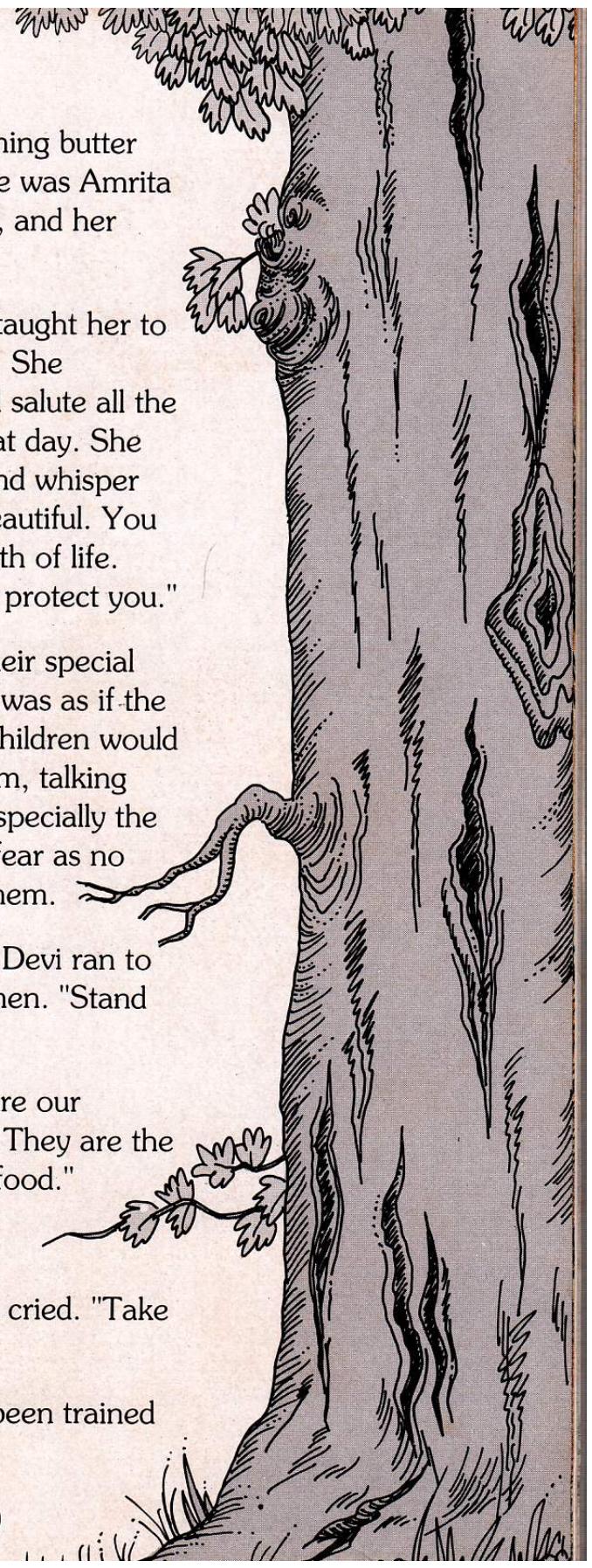


healthy environment. And this could be done only if people changed the way they lived in their surroundings.

Jambaji went from community to community preaching simple tenets. Do not cut any green tree, do not kill any animal or bird, respect every living being, it has as much a right to life as we humans do.

This sincere young man began to preach twenty-nine such tenets. Soon he also attracted a number of followers who joined him in his mission. They called themselves Bishnois or the twenty-niners after these tenets. Over time entire villages were converted to the twenty-nine tenets of Jambaji, and began to practice a lifestyle that these principles preached. These villages grew green and prosperous. Their green cover helped protect them from the uncertainties of weather. Animals and birds, wild and tame, flourished in the safety and security. And these communities continued to keep up Jambaji's tenets.

Almost three hundred years passed. One day the king of that region started to build a new palace. The neighbouring villages were known to have thick groves of trees. The king ordered his men to cut the trees and get wood for constructing the palace. The king's men arrived at the village, armed with their axes. But this was a Bishnoi village. For hundreds of years, generations of the villagers had protected and nurtured their vegetation, land, and wildlife. They had followed the twenty-nine tenets of Jambaji. Even a mighty king could not destroy their faith.



One of the women of the village was churning butter when she heard the commotion. Her name was Amrita Devi. She saw the men sharpen their axes, and her mind flashed back to her childhood.

Amrita remembered how her mother had taught her to love trees and follow the tenets of Jambaji. She remembered how each morning she would salute all the trees and then choose a special one for that day. She would put her arms round the tree trunk and whisper into the bark. "Tree, you are strong and beautiful. You guard us, you feed us, you give us the breath of life. Thank you, tree. Give me your strength to protect you."

The other children in the village too had their special trees that they would talk to, would hug. It was as if the trees were their brothers and sisters. The children would play among the trees, singing songs to them, talking with them, and all the birds and animals, especially the blackbuck, would also listen. They had no fear as no one in the village ever hunted or harmed them.

And now the trees were in danger. Amrita Devi ran to the grove of trees and confronted the axemen. "Stand back," they shouted.

"Leave our trees," pleaded Amrita. "They are our brothers and sisters, our village protectors. They are the breath of life, the water we drink, and our food."

"Move away," shouted the axemen.

Amrita hugged a tree. "Chop me first," she cried. "Take my life, leave my tree."

The axemen were surprised, but they had been trained



only to obey orders. They tore her away and threw her on the ground. Amrita was up quickly and back at her tree. The axemen began to chop at her ankles. She sank down to the ground, but did not let go of the tree. The axemen had to cut through her body before their axes could strike the tree.

No sooner did Amrita fall than hundreds of villagers, old and young, rushed to the trees. Each one hugged a tree.

The king's men kept on killing each one. And as they fell, more and more and more came, from villages near and far, not letting a single tree fall. The axemen had to give up. But not before 363 people lay dead at the feet of the trees they had hugged to save.

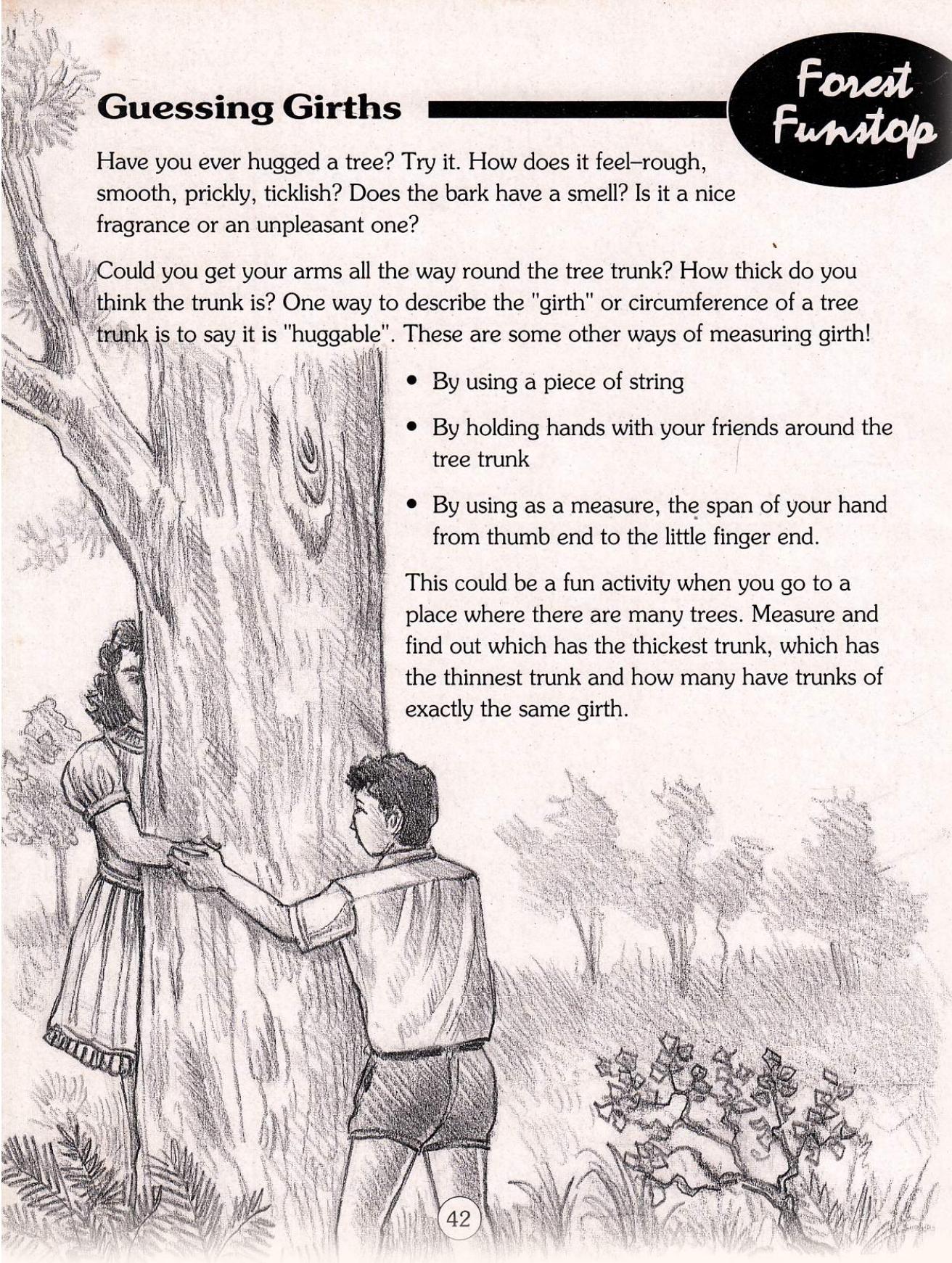
When the king heard of this incident, he couldn't believe that people could lay down their lives for trees. He personally visited the village. The villagers were saying prayers for their companions who had sacrificed themselves to save their trees. But they were proud, yet humble. They explained that their love for the trees grew from the realization that their lives depended on trees. "The trees can survive without us," they said, "but we cannot survive without trees."

The king was deeply moved. He proclaimed that from then on, no Bishnoi village would ever be called upon to provide timber or wildlife by hunting. He ordered that the Bishnoi faith be respected in his kingdom.

Today, almost three centuries later, the Bishnoi community is still intact. Their villages are oases in a region that is almost desert. Trees are in abundance and animals roam free of fear and danger, especially the handsome blackbuck.

The twenty-nine tenets continue to live, giving life to the land and its people.

*Based on true incidents.
Written by Mamata Pandya*



Guessing Girths

Forest Funstop

Have you ever hugged a tree? Try it. How does it feel—rough, smooth, prickly, ticklish? Does the bark have a smell? Is it a nice fragrance or an unpleasant one?

Could you get your arms all the way round the tree trunk? How thick do you think the trunk is? One way to describe the "girth" or circumference of a tree trunk is to say it is "huggable". These are some other ways of measuring girth!

- By using a piece of string
- By holding hands with your friends around the tree trunk
- By using as a measure, the span of your hand from thumb end to the little finger end.

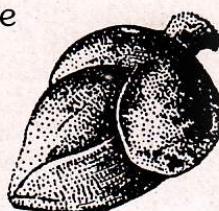
This could be a fun activity when you go to a place where there are many trees. Measure and find out which has the thickest trunk, which has the thinnest trunk and how many have trunks of exactly the same girth.

Man of the Trees

What difference will one tree less or more make? This is what we often think, as we hesitate to plant or protect trees. Here is the true story of one man and his dream to green the earth; and of a lifetime spent in making this dream come true. A lesson that with a vision and with determination even one person can make a difference.

A five-year-old boy once found himself lost in the forests near his home. As he wandered through the thick greenery with a leafy canopy over his head, he forgot that he was lost, he forgot to be afraid. Rather, he felt enthralled and exhilarated. He felt that he was among friends. He felt the peace and majesty of the green world. He had an experience that would mark the path that he would take for the rest of his life. Many years later he wrote "I had entered the temple of the woods. I sank to the ground in a state of ecstasy."

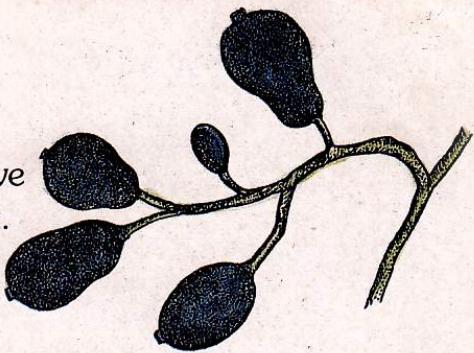
The boy's name was Richard. He spent his infancy and childhood in the company of trees. He worked with his father in the garden and nursery, and on the plot of land his father gave him for growing trees. Under the shade of a great chestnut tree in his family garden, Richard would play. He used the branches as his tables and chairs as he ate fruit and gazed at the world beneath him. At the age of 10, he wrote his first essay on trees. Young Richard would spend hours in the forest near his home in the company of his tall, quiet friends. His parents often thought that he was lost. Gradually they stopped worrying because they knew that Richard would be wandering among his beloved friends.



When he was still a boy, Richard heard a story of a man in Canada who had killed a bear with a shovel. He was so taken with this tale of courage that he made up his mind to go to Canada, and he did so as soon as he left school. Working at a number of odd jobs, he earned enough to study



silviculture (the science of planting and growing trees) at the University there. So the childhood love for trees grew into the proper study of the subject.

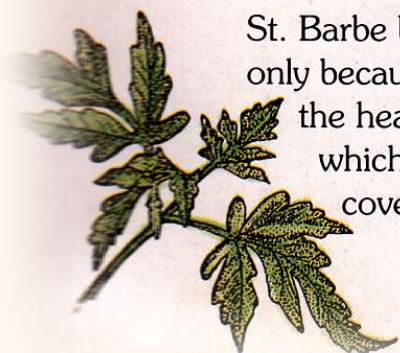


After completing his studies, Richard took up his first job as a forester in far-off Kenya. He arrived on the new continent with visions of making friends with the forests of Africa. But what he saw was that people were destroying the forests in their haste to clear land for fields and towns, and for what the cut trees would fetch them by way of money.

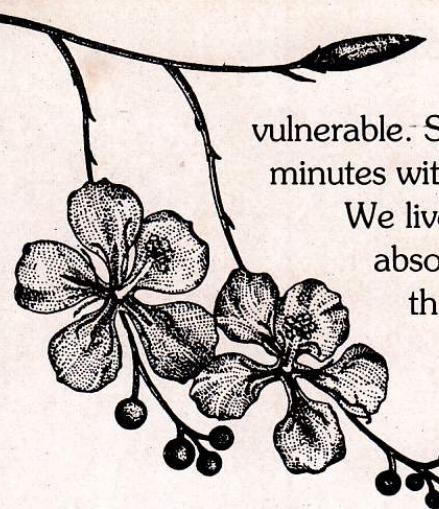
Young Richard was shocked and shaken. For him it was like seeing Mother Earth being skinned alive. He felt that at that rate, the earth's very life was in danger. He reasoned that if a person loses one-third of his or her skin, a person will die. If a tree loses one-third of its bark, the tree will die. If the world loses one-third of its trees, the world will die.

There was no time to lose. Richard felt that he had to do something to heal these wounds, and that was to plant trees. So in 1922, he set up an organization in Kenya called Men of the Trees to do just this. Today this organization has branches all over the world.

Thus a young boy's love for trees and a young man's study of trees came together into a lifelong mission to conserve, save and protect trees. Richard grew up to be Richard St. Barbe Baker. In Kenya where he spent many years as a forester they called him Baba Wya Miti, the affectionate Father of the Trees, or Bwana Wya Miti—the Master of the Trees. In Australia they named him King of the Trees, and in California, the Saint of the Redwoods. Today, world over, he is simply, the Man of the Trees.



St. Barbe brought about a revolution in ideas about trees, not only because he was a tree scientist or trained forester. He had the head of a scientist, but the heart of a humanitarian which could not bear to see that the skin that is forest cover being torn from the earth, leaving it bare and



vulnerable. St. Barbe often said, "We live less than five minutes without air and the trees give us the air we breathe.

We live less than five days without water, and trees are absolutely essential in the water cycle. We live less than five weeks without food and without the trees we could not grow food."

His message was simple "If we continue tearing away the earth's green cloak at the rate that we have, we soon won't have enough

trees to provide the oxygen we need to survive, and life will disappear from the planet. All that's required is some intelligent stewardship. It's a world-wide responsibility."

Till he died in 1982, at the age of 93 years, this Pied Piper of trees continued to travel around the world, with this simple message. At the age of 88, he went to the Himalayas to bless the famous Chipko movement to protect trees and natural resources. At the age of 91 he said that he would go on a fast-unto-death to protest against the threat to Silent Valley, one of India's tropical rainforests.

Through his life St. Barbe dreamed of an international network of young people healing the planet through tree planting. He said, "I have the dream of earth made green again, an earth healed and made whole by the efforts of children. Children of all nations planting trees to express their special understanding of the earth as their home, children of all races holding hands, circling the earth, expressing and celebrating their understanding of all children as their brothers and sisters."

*Based on the life of St. Barbe Baker.
Written by Mamata Pandya*



Grow a Tree

Forest Funstop

For any tree planting activity to be successful, advance planning and preparation are necessary. The best time to plant is just after the first monsoon showers. Then your sapling will get a good start with rain water.

First of all, decide where you will plant. Prepare the land by clearing it of stones and lumps.

Decide what you will plant: A fruit tree, a flowering tree, a tree that gives shade, or a tree that will attract lots of birds?

Find out where to get a sapling of the tree you choose. It could be a private nursery or one run by the forest department.

Dig a pit large enough for the roots of your sapling to fit comfortably. Fill half the hole with soil.

Place the sapling in the hole, roots pointing downwards. Make sure the roots are not tangled or too cramped in the hole.

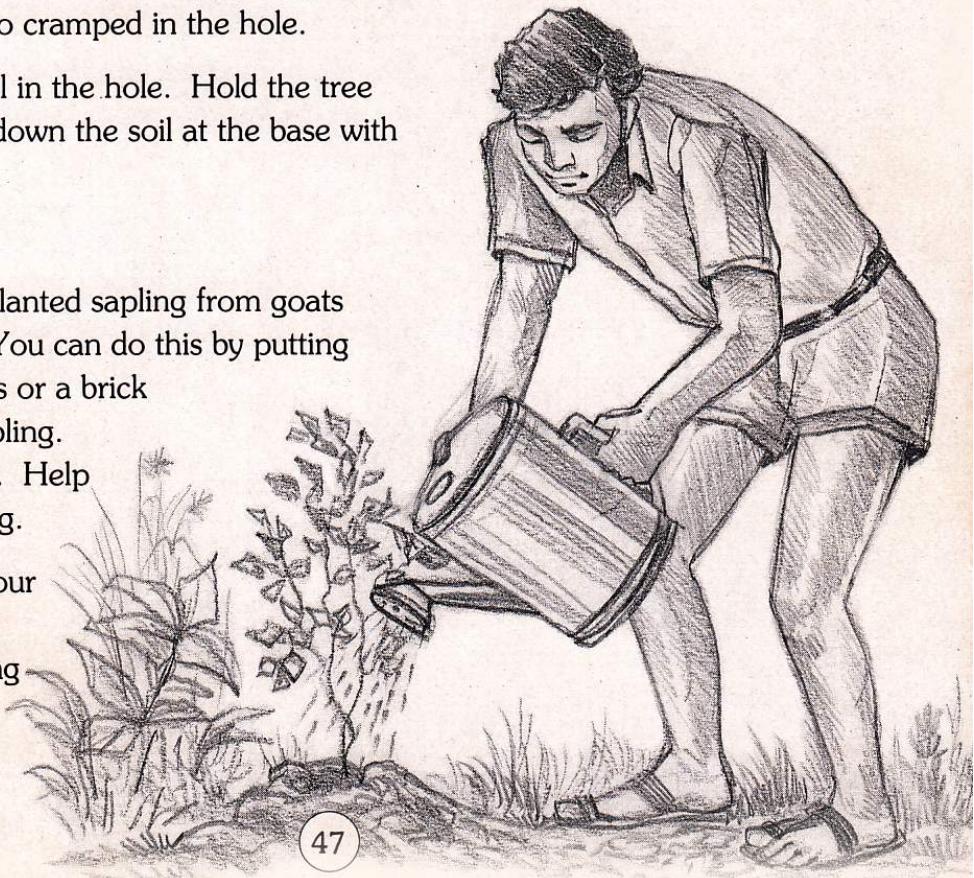
Fill the remaining soil in the hole. Hold the tree sapling erect. Pack down the soil at the base with your hands.

Water your sapling.

Protect your newly planted sapling from goats and other animals. You can do this by putting up a barrier of thorns or a brick guard around the sapling.

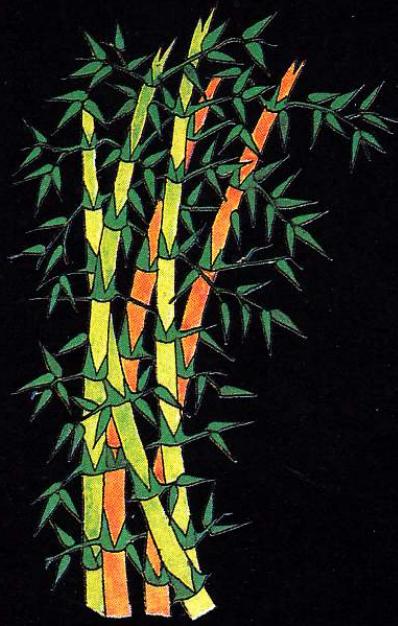
Nurture your sapling. Help it grow big and strong.

Better still, involve your family, friends and neighbours in growing trees. Green the earth!



From them we have beauty,
wisdom, love,
The air we breathe,
the water we drink,
the food we eat and the strength.

St. Barbe Baker





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